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# Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

/058 W
---------- 031804
R 031305Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3785

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FOLLOWING TEL BOMBAY 259 DTD 03 FEB 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN GUJARAT

REF: BOMBAY 0229, BOMBAY 0210

1. IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE IN TAMIL NADU HAS INCREASED UNCERTAINTY OVER FUTURE OF JANATA FRONT GOVERNMENT IN GUJARAT AND HAS GIVEN ADDED IMPETUS TO GROWING BELIEF THAT FRONT GOVERNMENT'S DAYS ARE LIMITED. WE ARE TRYING TO GET MORE OF LATEST VIEWS FROM GUJARAT SOURCES IN BOMBAY, BUT THOUGHT WE WOULD SUBMIT OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT IN THE MEANTIME.

2. SITUATIONS IN TAMIL NADU AND GUJARAT ARE BASICALLY DIFFERENT IN THAT GOVERNMENT IN FORMER WAS TO EXPIRE IN MARCH, 1976, WHILE GOVERNMENT IN LATTER SCHEDULED TO CONTINUE FOR ANOTHER FOUR-AND-A-HALF YEARS. SOME PEOPLE HERE ARE TOYING WITH NOTION THAT MRS. GANDHI WOUD PREFER THE FORMATION OF A CONGRESS (R) GOVERNMENT IN THE STATE TO THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE IN GUJARAT. WHILE WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT DELHI WOULD PREFER
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THAT THE FRONT'S FALL BE OF ITS OWN MAKING, DELHI'S PREFERENCE

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FOR A CONGRESS (R) GOVERNMENT IN GUJARAT OVER PRESIDENTIAL RULE MIGHT IMPEL IT TO STIMULATE DEVELOPMENTS PREPARING THE WAY FOR A CONG(R) GOVERNMENT. GPCC'R) HITENDRA DESAI'S TRIP TO DELHI FEBRUARY 1 TO BRIEF NATIONAL LEADERS ON THE GUJARAT SITUATION SUGGESTS THAT, WITH TAMIL NADU OUT OF THE WAY, DELHI MAY BE PREPARING TO CONCENTRATE ON GUJARAT.

3. CONGRESS (R) NOW HAS 73 OF THE STATE LEGISLATURE OF 179 SEATS (OF THE NORMAL TOTAL OF 182 ONE SEAT WAS NOT FILLED IN THE JUNE ELECTIONS, AND TWO LEGISLATORS HAVE DIED SINCE JUNE). ONE LATE ASSESSMENT REACHING US IS THAT 11 KMLP AND TWO INDEPENDENT MLAS MIGHT DESERT TO CONGRESS (R) WITHIN THE COMING FEW DAYS, BRINGING CONGRESS (R)'S TOTAL TO 86, OR WITHIN FOUR OF THE NUMBER IT NEEDS TO TOPPLE THE FRONT. SINCE THESE AND THE OTHERS NEEDED TO FORM A GOVERNMENT MUST COME FROM THE CONGRESS (O), OR THE REMAINING INDEPENDENTS, PRESSURE FROM THE CONGRESS (R) ON POSSIBLE DEFECTORS COULD WELL INCREASE IN THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS.

4. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT TWO OR THREE DAYS BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY IS SCHEDULED TO CONVENE ON FEBRUARY 9, THE GOVERNOR WILL ASK BABUBHAI PATEL TO PROVE THAT HE HAS THE NECESSARY MAJORITY TO CONTINUE IN POWER. THESE OBSERVERS BELIEVE PATEL WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DO SO AND THAT THE GOVERNOR WILL THEN ASK THE CONGRESS (R) TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. IF CONGRESS (R) IS UNABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT AT THAT TIME, PRESIDENT'S RULE COULD BE IMPOSED, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY.

5. WE DO NOT RULE OUT THEPOSSIBILITY IN PARA 4 BUT ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT DELHI WILL NOT MOVE ALONG THAT LINE UNTIL CONGRESS (R) IS CERTAIN OF MAJORITY NEEDED TO FORM A GOVERNMENT IN VIEW OF MRS. GANDHI'S PREFERENCE FOR A CONGRESS (R) GOVERNMENT OVER PRESIDENTIAL RULE. HOWEVER, AS ONE PUNDIT HAS SAID, THE ONLY PREDICTABLE THING ABOUT MRS. GANDHI IS HER UNPREDICTABILITY, AND SHE MIGHT GO FOR PRESIDENT'S RULE. MOST SIGNS INDICATE THAT SHE IS NOT LIKELY TO BE WILLINGS TO TOLERATE PRESENT SITUATION IN GUJARAT FOR LONG.
COURTNEY

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